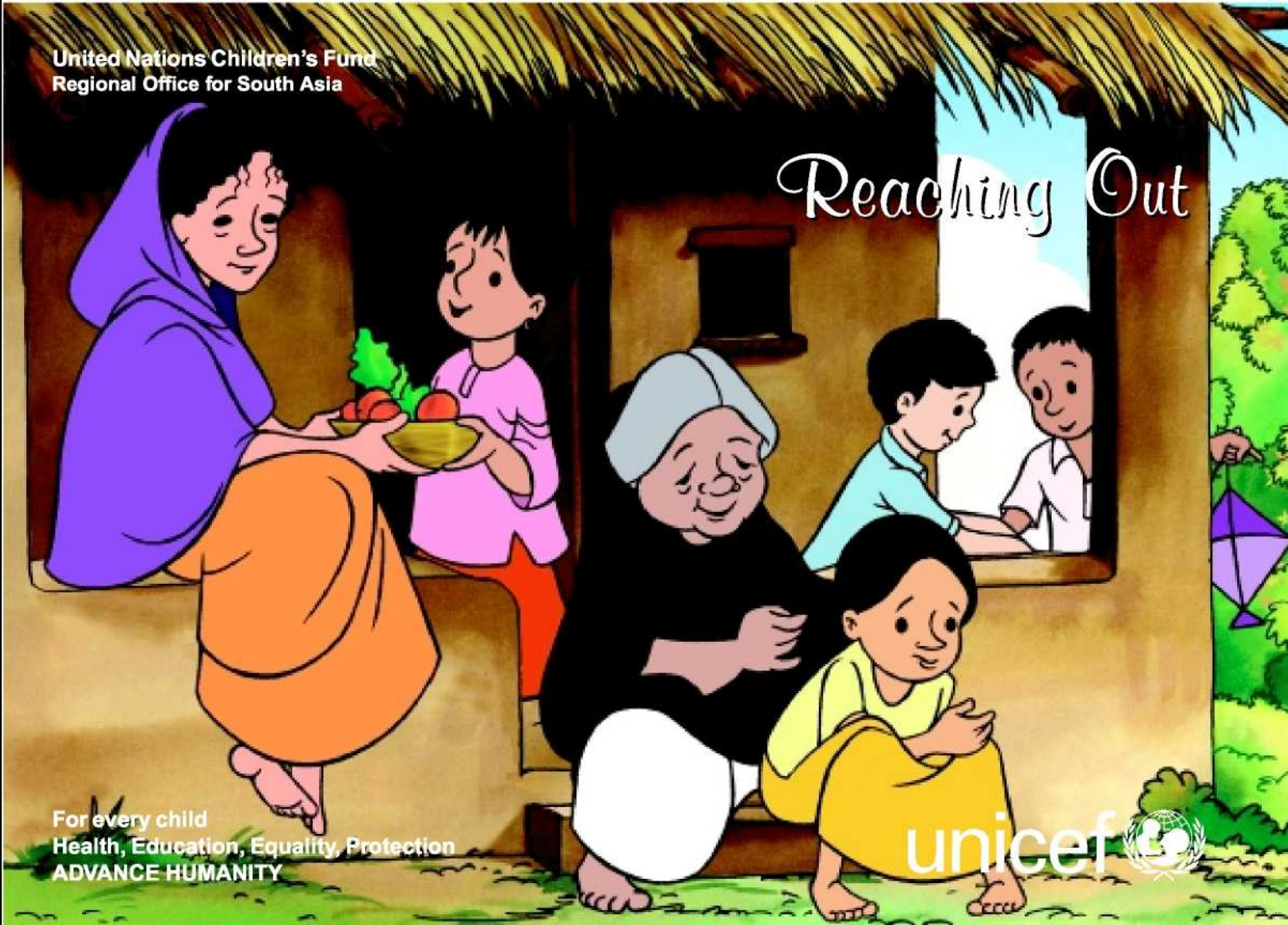


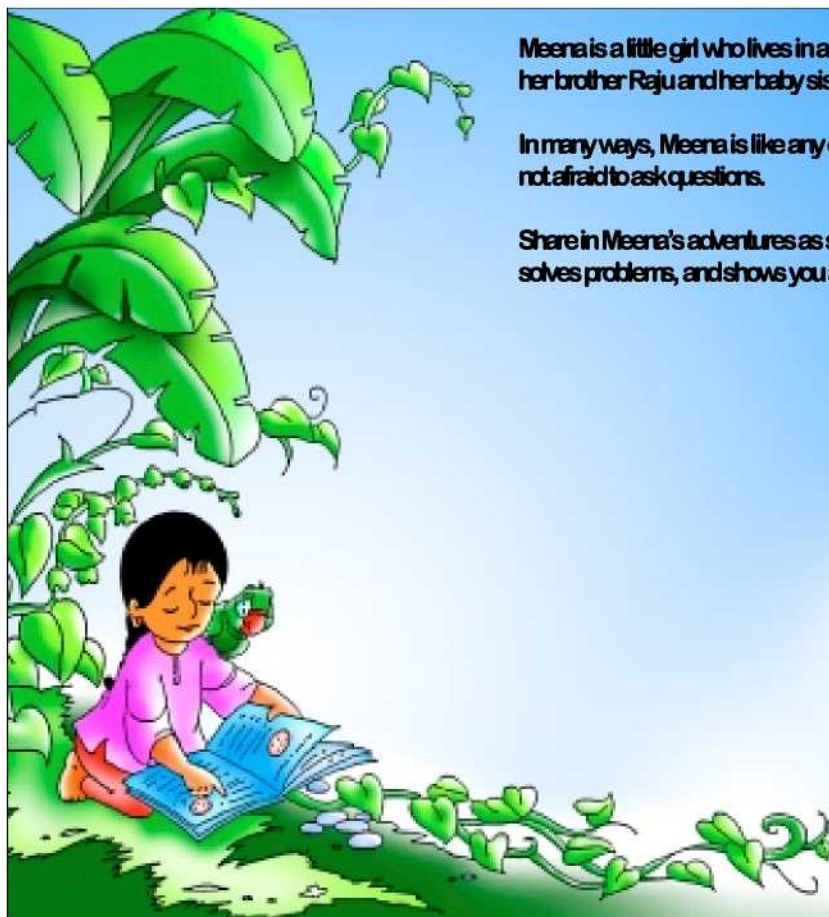
United Nations Children's Fund
Regional Office for South Asia

Reaching Out

For every child
Health, Education, Equality, Protection
ADVANCE HUMANITY

unicef 





Meena is a little girl who lives in a village with her parents, her grandmother, her brother Raju and her baby sister, Rani. Mithu, the parrot, is her best friend.

In many ways, Meena is like any other little girl you know. She is friendly but is not afraid to ask questions.

Share in Meena's adventures as she laughs, climbs trees, asks questions and solves problems, and shows you all the things that a little girl can do.

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Produced with support from The Government of Norway	

One morning, Meena and Raju were leaving for school. They waved goodbye to their mother and father who were going away for a few days. Granny was staying at home to look after the children.



On the way to school, Meena and Raju saw their friend, Babul. "Why aren't you coming to school?" Meena asked. "My mother is sick and I must stay at home to help," Babul said sadly.





Meena and Raju were very worried about their friend. When they met the Health Worker, Raju asked: "Babul's father got sick and died. Now his mother is sick. Is she going to die too? And then who will look after Babul and his sister?"



The Health Worker said: "I hope Babul's mother can live long enough to see her children grow up. I am glad that you are thinking about Babul. He needs good friends to help him now."

That afternoon Meena and Raju wanted to visit Babul's house, but Granny was worried. She had learned that Babul's father had died of a disease called HIV/AIDS. Granny said: "Babul's mother has the same disease. I'm afraid that you might catch it."

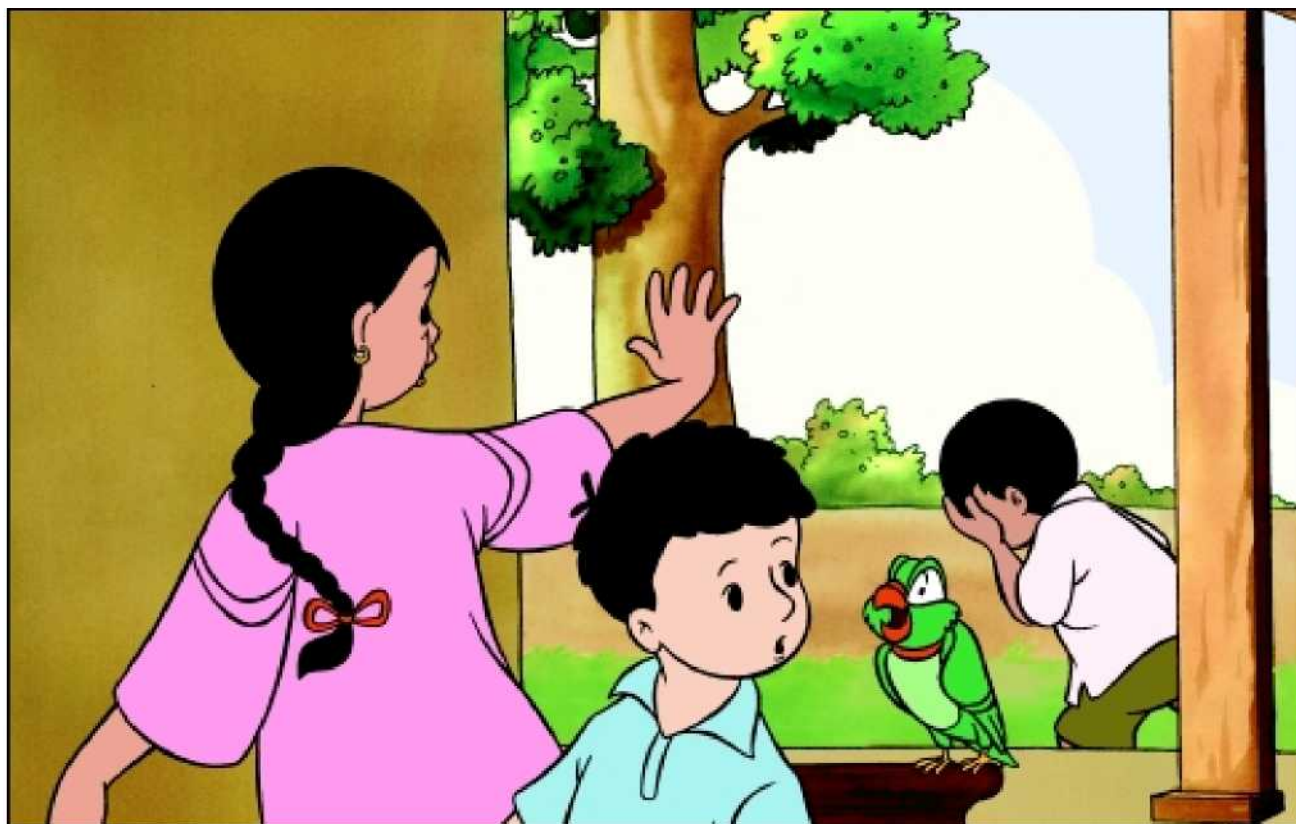


Meena told Granny what she had learnt in school about HIV and AIDS: "Teacher says that you cannot catch it by being someone's friend, by touching them or playing with them." But Granny said: "I'm still very afraid. I don't want you to go."



Just then the children heard a sound near the house. It was Babul. He had heard everything.





Meena called out to him, but Babul ran away, crying. Meena was very upset.



Later Meena climbed up a tree near Babul's house. She was very concerned about Babul, but she knew that she could not visit. Then the Health Worker came to see Babul's mother. Meena tried to climb down and leave, but her hair was caught, so she overheard the two women talking.



Babul's mother said: "I am trying to keep healthy but I'm so worried about who will look after my children if I am not here." The Health Worker replied: "I was an orphan, but my relatives helped me to finish my education."

Babul's mother shook her head sadly. "I want my children to stay in school. But my own parents are dead and my husband's relatives are scared of the disease. They stay away from us." The Health Worker replied kindly: "I'll try to find some help."



The Health Worker advised Babul's mother: "For now, you must look after your health. What fruit and vegetables are you eating?" Babul's mother sighed. "There is nobody to look after the garden," she said.



Meena ran back to her own garden and picked some vegetables. She felt happier. Now she could do something to help Babul's family.



She asked Mithu, her parrot, to carry the vegetables to Babul's house. When no one was looking, Mithu flew over and quickly dropped the vegetables on the step.



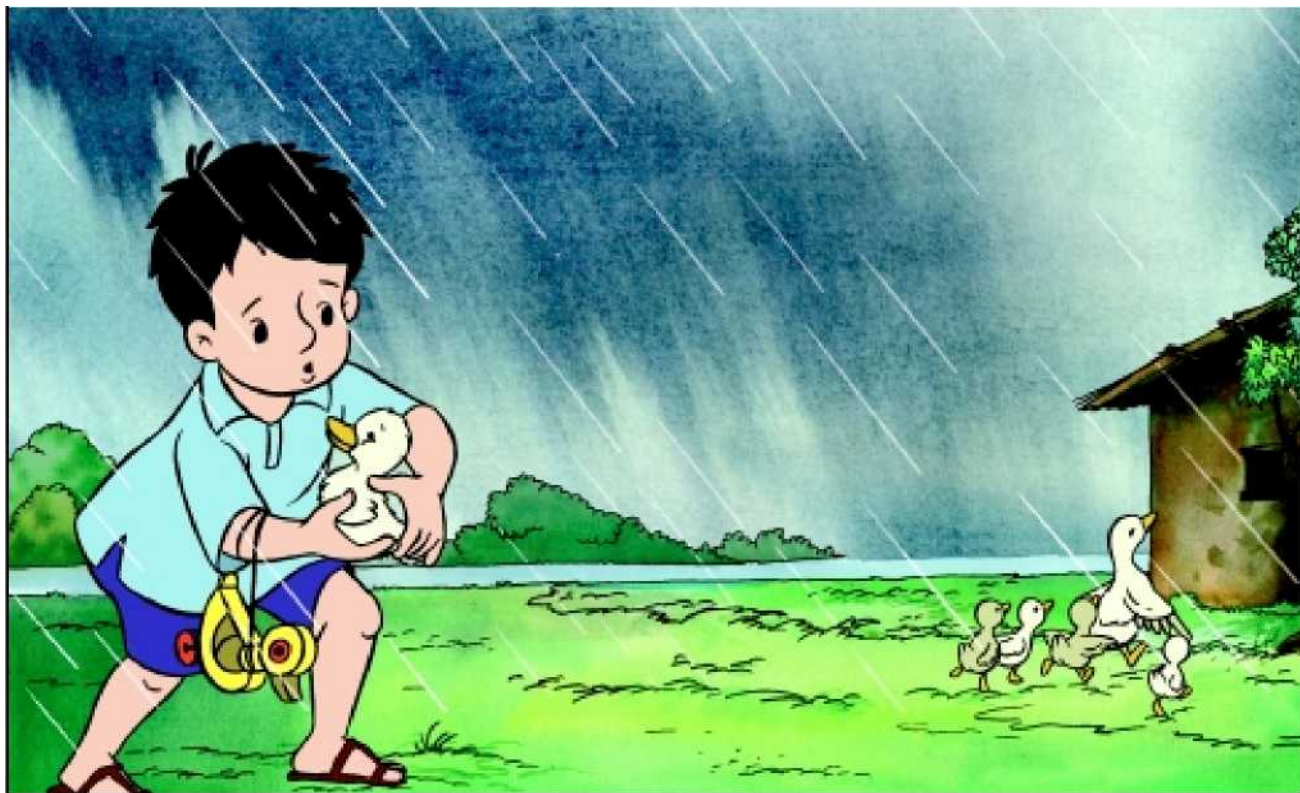


That evening Meena and Raju were talking with Granny. Meena said: “Granny, I remember how Babul’s mother came to see you every day when you were sick last year.”



Granny became *very* thoughtful. She told the children: “Neighbours should help each other. But I’m still scared about this disease. I want to talk to the Health Worker to find out more about it.”

Next day Raju was out playing. He saw one of Babul's ducklings wandering by itself, lost. He picked it up to return it to its mother.



Babul saw Raju coming and was upset and angry. He shouted: "Stay away from here! You know what your grandmother said." Feeling sad and confused, Raju put the duckling down and walked back home.



Meena saw what had happened. She also felt sad. She secretly sent Mithu to Babul's house again, this time with a gift of eggs.



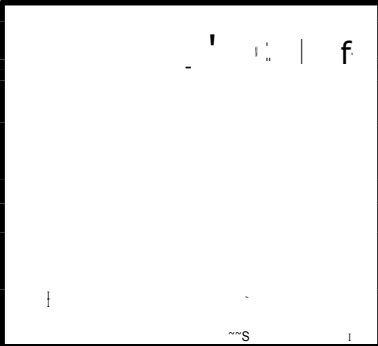
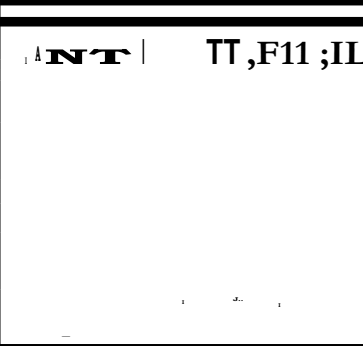
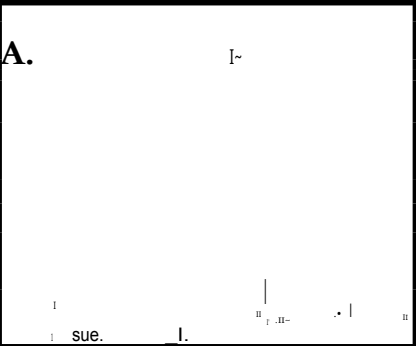
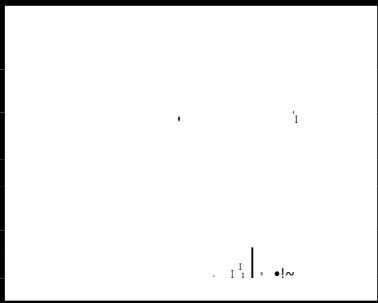
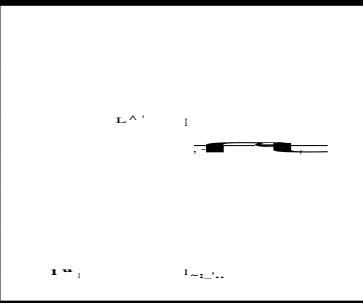
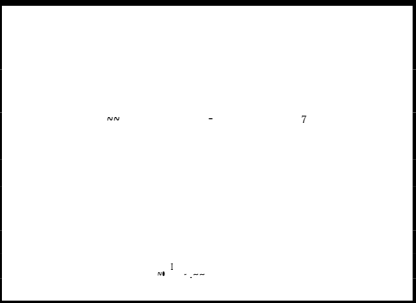
On the weekend, Meena and Raju met the Health Worker. “Be careful near the river. It’s very high today,” the Health Worker warned the children. But Raju was very curious. He sneaked off to the river, when no one was looking, to see how high it really was.





The Health Worker went home with Meena to see Granny. Granny said: “We would like to help Babul’s family but I am scared we could catch AIDS too.” The Health Worker replied, “I’m glad you have asked. It’s good to understand clearly about HIV/AIDS.”

The Health Worker showed Granny and Meena a book, which explained all about HIV and AIDS. She explained: “It is safe to be friends and care for people with HIV and AIDS”.

		
TOUCHING	SHARING PLATES OR CUPS	SHARING CLOTHES
		
HUGGING & KISSING	COUGHING & SNEEZING	MOSQUITO BITES

Granny and Meena looked carefully at the pictures and the Health Worker answered all their questions clearly. Meena said: “Does this mean we can go and see Babul’s family?” Granny smiled and said: “Yes, my dear, we’ll all go.”





Meanwhile Mithu had flown off looking for Raju. He spotted Raju stretching across a branch over the river. He was playing with his toy duck. Babul also saw Raju. "Careful, Raju! Don't fall in the river!" he shouted. But it was too late. The branch broke and Raju fell in.

Babul ran to save Raju. It was very difficult. The water was flowing fast and Babul was not strong enough to pull Raju out. Mithu flew off to get help.



“Help! Raju! Help!” Mithu called when he reached home. Meena, Granny and the Health Worker ran after Mithu to the river.



Meena, Granny and Health Worker arrived just in time. Babul could not hold on to Raju for much longer. Together they all managed to pull Raju out of the river.



With tears in her eyes, Granny put one arm around Raju and the other around Babul. She was so thankful to Babul for saving Raju. Meena smiled with joy.



Just then Mithu flew back with Raju's toy duck. He had rescued it from the river. "Oh, thank you, Mithu... and thank you, Babul," said Raju, smiling.





“Come, Babul,” said Granny. “Let’s go to your house. I want to tell your mother what a brave boy she has.” They all went together to Babul’s house.



Since that day, Meena's family often visits Babul's house to talk with the family and to help. They are good friends and neighbours.

Granny has also encouraged other neighbours to come and help. Babul's mother is so pleased to have this support. She feels stronger and happier.



In the evenings, Babul's mother tells her children stories about their family. Babul likes to write these down so that he and his sister will always remember them. Sometimes Meena helps him.



Babul's mother still worries about the future. Granny tells her: "I will speak with your relatives. I am sure they will be willing to help once they understand better about HIV/AIDS. And don't worry. We will always make sure that your children are okay."



Babul and his sister feel happier now too. They go to school everyday with their friends, Meena and Raju. All the children play happily together.



What are HIV and AIDS?

AIDS is caused by a virus called HIV. HIV attacks the body's immune system, which protects us against diseases. When people have HIV, their bodies are less able to fight the germs which cause diseases and so they often become sick. When people with HIV become *very* ill with many diseases, then they have developed AIDS.



People may have HIV for many years without knowing it. During this time, they can pass on HIV to others.

There are some drugs for helping people infected by HIV to remain healthy for longer, but there is no cure for AIDS. People who have AIDS will eventually die. However, it is possible for people to live well with HIV for many years before they become *very* sick.

Because there is no cure for HIV/AIDS, it must be prevented. Adults and children all have the right to know about HIV/AIDS.

How can HIV spread?

HIV spreads when the virus passes from one person to another:



through unprotected sex
with another person
who is already infected
with HIV



mothers with HIV should talk
with their health workers about
ways to reduce the risk of their
baby getting infected



health workers can advise
mothers in choosing the
safest option for feeding
their babies.

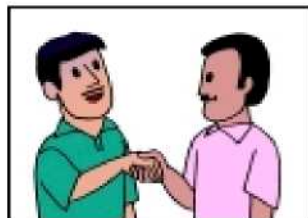


through unsterilised
needles, razors and other
instruments which cut or
inject the skin



through blood from an
infected person

**HIV *cannot* spread
by:**



touching and
shaking hands



sharing cups and
plates



sharing clothes



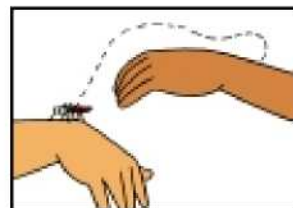
hugging and
kissing



sneezing and
coughing

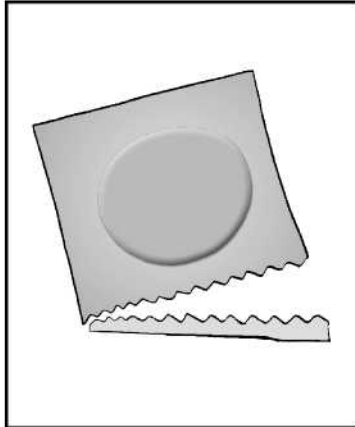


sharing toilets

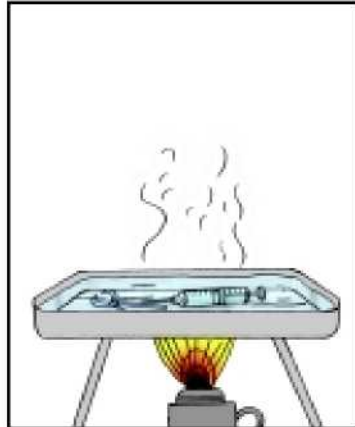


mosquitoes and
other insects

HIV also *cannot* spread by:



having protected sex
by using a condom



using sterilised medical
equipment



using HIV tested blood
for transfusions

Living well with HIV

Even if people are infected by HIV, they can help themselves to live well for many years. They also need support and care from family and friends to live as healthily and happily as possible.

Meena and her family help Babul's mother by:

- * Bringing her fresh fruit and vegetables and other healthy food.
- * Visiting her often so she does not get lonely.
- * Helping with household tasks.
- * Calling the health worker if she falls sick.
- * Helping her to plan for her children's future.
- ~ Educating other people in the community, so that they are not afraid to visit someone with HIV/AIDS.

Babul and his sister feel much happier now that they have friends who help them and play with them.

